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THE FAMINE IN INDIA.

BY SIR EDWIN ARNOLD, KNIGHT COMMANDER OF THE INDIAN
EMPIRE, AND COMPANION OF THE STAR OF INDIA.

THAT recent happy accord of the two great Anglo-Saxon nations, England and America, which, under the name of the "Treaty of Arbitration," approaches, as all good men hope, final ratification, and which will mark a new epoch in the history of Christian civilization, brings with it a special necessity. This is that the two peoples should continually better and better understand each other. Every sincere effort, however humble, towards such an end is permitted and desirable, and consequently I have gladly accepted a request to lay some of the chief facts regarding Indian famines, and the present visitation in particular, before the American public, that they may more justly judge the stupendous tasks undertaken by the Queen's government in India, the faithful spirit in which that government administers its prodigious charge, and some of the reasons why, without expecting any such complete success as is really impossible in saving the lives of the imperilled millions of our Indian fellow-subjects, American observers may perceive the sincere nobility of England's purpose, and may appreciate—nay, even admire—a self-imposed responsibility without parallel in the history of righteous and capable rule.

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All countries depend for existence on that wonderful dispensation of rain which, lifted in the form of cloud from the ocean by the rays of the sun, and wafted back to the original river sources, descends to fertilize the earth, thus furnishing an analogue of the circulation of venous and arterial blood in human bodies.

Well does the Koran praise Allah for his gift of that soft and serviceable tribute of the sky, "which might be black and bitter if he willed," a true and exquisite miracle of nature. But India positively lives by the rain, as a child by its mother's breasts. Twinned like those maternal inventions of creative beneficence are also the sources of India's sustenance, to wit, the southwest and the northwest monsoon. From May or June until September, with the first there comes, almost all over the Peninsula, after the hot weather, and what is called the "*burra choop*," or "great silence," a copious flood of rain, turning the dry, yellow soil into emerald green as if by magic; this is the sign for beginning agriculture. If all be well it will soak the land sufficiently to let the peasant get into it first the *kharif*, or summer crop, to be reaped in the autumn, and next the *rabi*, to be sown later, and reaped in the spring.

The *kharif* sowing is principally of millets, pulses and rice—the *rabi* sowing is of wheat, barley, and certain late leguminous crops. But unless the southwest monsoon has brought very copious and constant downfalls, India always eagerly expects that the northeast monsoon will repair the supply by supplementary contributions during November and December. The *kharif* crops are of both early and late kind. The *rabi* crops take four months to come to harvest. Here then, speaking broadly, is the ordinary programme of India's agricultural year, and such, with certain alterations in the seed-sowing of *kharif* and *rabi*, is the usual rotation system of the Indian farmer. Every now and then the cycle is not exact, and because of spots on the sun, or reasons remaining unexplained, Nature's accepted plan goes amiss. By one or both monsoons the fruitful water is withheld, or is given only from niggard clouds; and then, in all epochs of India's history, death in his most cruel shape has stalked over the land and has slain the ryots and their families by millions.

See what it means, moreover—on what a colossal scale of

horror and ruin—this fatal event of a deficient rainfall. To feed only the Northwest and Oudh takes fifteen and a half million acres; to feed Bengal fifty-four and a half millions; to feed Bombay twenty-four and a half millions, and to feed Madras thirty-two million acres of properly watered lands! The population of these—only a portion, remember, of the vast country—would mount up to at least 115 millions of souls, and, speaking generally, they all depend in less or greater degree upon those timely *kharif* and *rabi* rains. Americans, with huge areas of soil still happily left to conquer, may ask why the area of cultivated ground is not increased. The reply is that, enormous albeit Hindostan appears in extent upon the maps, there is not much good ground remaining to be taken up. There are rich regions where the climate is deadly, as in the Terai; there are poor tracts where population is scanty; but neither for the old-fashioned Hindoo peasant nor for modern men with new methods and machinery does there exist any considerable margin of unused soil.

Could, then, the native cultivator double his yield by manures? He certainly employs none which are artificial and imported, like the nitrates; but he knows what he is about with his own simple materials, and when high authorities mock him for using up all the cattle-droppings for fuel cakes, he laughs silently because he knows that the ashes of *gauri* are just as precious to the soil as the natural commodity unburned. But practically the tilth is never seriously mended in India, except close to the villages and for sugar-cane, opium, or garden crops, unless it be by burning and scratching into the red or grey soil some jungle branches and dead leaves.

Neither have Western machinery nor scientific farming methods found any success. What can Sussex, or even Massachusetts, do with the husbandman who will insist on carrying a plough or a wheelbarrow upon his head, and whose fathers for 3,000 years past have stood upon a pointed stick drawn by a buffalo in order to make a two-inch furrow. The Hindoo lives directly and placidly from the bountiful hand of Heaven, which he calls “Indra.” Dwelling in his village he tills only so much of the culturable jungle as can be easily reached morning and evening by his slow-moving cattle. He has not the

capital nor the mind for costly Western implements ; and his winnowing-machine is still and always the wind blowing from Heaven. *Jowarri* and *bajri* are for the humble ; wheat, flour, and rice for the Brahmans and the rich, with plenty of *dal* and pulses to make up for the meat which the strong Sahib and savage Mohammedan devour. Such is his simple fare—millet-cakes and boiled leaves of rape and gram with Mhowa fruit, mango, plantain, and cocoanut—by these the blameless existence of the Hindoo sustains its innocent span. Fowls and eggs are held by most in abhorrence ; no cheese is so much as known ; and about 180 millions of that wonderful people never taste animal food at all, unless in the shape of milk, curds, and *ghi*, which last is clarified butter.

Thus all hangs upon Indra and the rain. If the southwest monsoon is exceptionally late in setting in, or premature in its cessation, or scanty and irregular, or excessive during its period of duration, great mischief may be done, and any failure of the rain at this season is damaging not only to the crops then growing, but also to the winter crops which are sown after the monsoon stops, and to which a thoroughly moistened seed bed is essential. The early and late falls are looked for to soften the soil and admit of the ploughing preparatory to sowing the *kharif* in the one case and the *rabi* in the other, and delay in putting in the seed beyond a certain period is prejudicial to the growth and maturing of the crop. The millets and pulses of the *kharif* crop are hardy plants, and can bear a great deal of irregularity ; but any partial cessation of the rainfall exceeding a month in duration, or, as it is called, “a break” in the rains of the monsoon, will do them great injury, especially if, as is sometimes the case during such a break, a hot, dry wind also sets in. Rice is more delicate, and perishes if the plants are either too deeply submerged, or their roots left dry for a very few days, and for this reason the winter rice of Bengal and the sea coast is a precarious crop, dependent on the continuation of rainfall in September and October, after the monsoon has generally ceased in Upper India.

In such words official documents in India have recognized the importance of the God of Rain, and the Queen’s government alone, among all past and present rulers, has undertaken the daring, the extraordinary charge, to supply the shortcomings of

Indra. Bygone Maharajahs and Mogul lords did much for policy, rather than philanthropy, in the way of helping Heaven by tanks and canals, and India is the best-irrigated country in the world except Lombardy. Great princes, chiefly for the sake of revenue, made those marvellous “*anicuts*” and “*tars*” and “*jheels*” of Mysore, Madras, Hyderabad, and Karnul, and private people have everywhere sunk the innumerable and most useful wells, for there is always water under the dry soil at from ten to forty feet, and the Sanskrit Mantra says, “He who plants a tree begets a son, and digs a well goeth to Swarga.” But ruling, as God knows we do, for the sake of the Indians first, and for revenue and reputation and power afterwards, the British in India have outdone all ancient works of artificial irrigation by such vast gifts to the land as the Ganges Canal, the East and West Jumna Canal, and those of the Bari Doab, of Agra, of the Lower Ganges, and the Soane, and the Sirhind. These cost tens of millions sterling and water millions of acres, otherwise arid, and far more quickly, too, than the bullock and the well, where the one leathern bucket, the mussak, asks six days to give to one acre its needful drink. Of course, where there is water there is always plenty. The Indian earth, lying red and yellow under the ever-fierce sun, demands but moisture to break into verdant foison, and the rich black soil of the Deccan will of itself hold water enough for every crop in ordinary years.

And now, see what this means : that the Queen’s government in India has solemnly and publicly accepted responsibility to the utmost limit of its unchecked power and enormous wealth, for all those years when the shortcomings of Indra and the fault of the still incomplete irrigation works bring the people to the “noose of Yama.” The average population in the districts under our rule is 211 to the square mile. Oudh, Bengal, and the Northwest Provinces show an average of over 400. I should put at about 200 millions, all told, the tale of souls within the Queen’s India, excluding feudatory states, and of these 140 millions would be Hindoos, 45 millions Mohammedans, and 15 millions of all the other religions. A vast preponderance of this population is rural. In Bengal, the Northwest and Oudh 93 per cent. of the people live in villages, of which, taking all India together, there will be, say, one village for every two square miles.

Here is an interesting and valuable table of the propor-

tions into which the adult male population is divided as regards employment :

	Per cent.	Estimated number of adult males.
Professional, including government service..	3.6	2,232,000
Domestic	6.2	3,844,000
Agricultural	56.2	34,844,000
Commercial	5.2	3,224,000
Industrial	13.1	8,122,000
Laborers	12.3	7,626,000
Independent and non-productive	3.4	2,108,000
	100.	62,000,000

Of those 2,232,000 classed as professional, about one million are employed under public authority, and include 223,000 police and village watchmen and 571,000 municipal, local, and village officials; about another million are employed in private professions, 629,000 being engaged in religious or charitable duties, 189,000 in literature, science and education; 218,000 in the fine arts.

Thirty-four and three-quarter millions, or 56.2 per cent., are returned as agricultural. As to this it must be remembered that :

(1.) The agricultural population is not restricted to adult males, large numbers of women and children being engaged in agriculture.

(2.) Many artisans and professionals, besides their trade, own and cultivate land, and must be added to the population that lives on the soil, as must also the greater part of the laboring population. So that, speaking broadly, it is probable that 90 per cent. of the rural population, or rather more than 80 per cent. of the total population, is closely connected with the land.

Now, therefore, the immense problem grows plainer and alas! darker. All India depends on the rain, and 80 per cent. of her children quite directly—so that when dearth-years come the laborers, the weavers, the potters, and the beggars, making about 40 per cent. of the 200 millions, begin immediately to famish, the rest quickly following. This is always the case. I find in the Blue Book just issued to Parliament the usual notice :

“In all provinces classes on relief are mainly low castes and laborers, with many weavers in Madras, Bombay, and Central Provinces, specially employed in weaving.”

Let me take from the same publication, which is only a few days old, the open repetition of that solemn pledge which the Queen's government has undertaken in the face of the world and of India, to fight for all these lives of Her Majesty's dark-skinned subjects, as though it were a great war waged for vital Imperial interests. Lord Elgin and his Council, dating from Calcutta, December 23, 1896, wrote to the Secretary of State for India as follows :

"On a former occasion, when Southern India was suffering from famine in 1877, a sum of something like £700,000 sterling was collected in England to be applied in India to the alleviation of distress. The application of this money led to a correspondence between Lord Lytton's government and the Secretary of State of that time, which terminated with Lord Cranbrooke's Despatch No. 46, dated 16th of May, 1878, and which the Famine Commissioners had before them when they discussed the subject in paragraphs 187 and 188 of their report. In the course of that correspondence it was laid down 'that the government is responsible, as far as may be practicable, for the saving of life by all the available means in its power,' and that 'it is not proper or expedient that the government should ask for private subscriptions to supplement its own expenditure on famine, especially as it is clear that such subscriptions can make no appreciable difference' in the amount of an expenditure which must be reckoned by millions. To these principles we steadfastly adhere."

Let these official words be noted. Her Majesty's government to-day, as before, adhere to the principle of "saving life by all the available means in its power." In accordance with such an unparalleled vow of duty, never accepted before in the annals of Empire, an all-embracing "Famine Department," has long been established, a "Famine Fund" has been instituted—officers of keen ability and devoted energy watch, inspect, enquire, and report constantly and ubiquitously, and the Indian people, so far as it knows or cares anything at all of politics, knows that the British Raj, as no conqueror, or power, or mighty Maharaj ever previously attempted, this British Raj which keeps the *burra choop* for them—the "Great Peace"—and lets scrupulously alone their religions, their women, their liberties, and their property, stands also self-charged before Heaven with the resolve to rescue them from death and misery at cost, if needful, of the last rupee of the Sirkar's treasure chest, whensoever that wrath or indifference of Indra comes against it. The ancient governments offered little or no resistance, believing, indeed, that "the sky of brass and the soil of iron" was merely the Divine way of

preventing the inhabitants of India from quite out-growing the productive capacity of their land.

You will hear in America echoes of those voices, ill-informed, egotistic, prejudiced, or positively treasonable and mischief-seeking, which say that India is unfairly taxed for army expenses, for home charges, and domestically. Do not believe this, until the true figures have been examined and compared with those of old times—of Akbar and the Peishwas—and then those figures, properly understood, will satisfy all reasonable minds that this great guardianship of India—committed to Britain for divine purposes—is as honestly and unselfishly conducted, as regards finance, as it has been gallantly won and heroically defended by arms, and faithfully and unsparingly ministered to by those silent lovers and servants of India, her matchless civilian officials. To keep the land safe from exterior dangers, to organize and maintain that vast machinery of internal administration, to toil unweariedly under that fierce sun at the material development of the prodigious peninsula, while always standing on guard as concerns the Muscovite, and the monsoons—these things necessitate a full treasury and a well-paid *personnel*; nor is there a point in which the economy and honesty of Indian finance might not find a fair defence. Suffice it to remark on this head that while the land revenue, now much reduced from bygone rates, is really a quit-rent paid to the government as landlord in accordance with immemorial Hindu and Mohammedan customs, the salt tax, so much clamored about, does not cost the individual peasant more than sevenpence a year, while the total fiscal burdens, producing thirty-seven millions sterling, may be set at four shillings per head. Here is the authoritative truth about the Queen's assessments as regards those whom the famines chiefly affect :

“ The agricultural laborers pay taxes on their liquor and salt, amounting to one shilling and eightpence (or $13\frac{1}{2}$ annas) per head, or each family pays about a fortnight's wages in the year. The artisans pay about two shillings (16 annas) each, or about the average earnings of five working days. Traders pay three shillings and threepence (26 annas) each. But any native of India who does not trade or own land, and who chooses to drink no spirituous liquor and to use no English cloth or iron, need pay in taxation only about sevenpence a year on account of the salt he consumes personally; and on a family of three persons the charge amounts to 1s. 9d., or about four days' wages of a laboring man and his wife.”

Since, then, there lies no undue burden on these poor and gentle peasants; since India is naturally so fertile that, besides feed-

ing her own two hundred and seventy millions she sends abroad in certain years thirty million hundredweight of grain and pulse, and twenty million hundredweight of rice ; since Her Majesty's government stands openly bound to save her from famines at whatever imperial cost, how is it that we have failed in past visitations to rescue from perishing a terribly large number of people, and shall, too, probably witness the termination of this present dearth mournfully marked by another awful loss of innocent lives ; for sanguine indeed would be that Englishman of adequate information who hoped to escape from the dark story of 1896-97 without deaths reckoned by the lakh—perhaps by the crore. To answer this I must go deeper than all official documents, and explain some of the hidden social causes in India that render absolute victory in these vast and honorable periodical struggles of the Sirkar with Destiny sadly impossible and never to be expected.

Civilized citizens, accustomed to an elaborate and expensive system of poor relief, have perhaps never asked themselves what is the ordinary social and civic manner in India of providing for the pauper population. I remember being asked by a newly appointed President of the Poor Law Board in one of Mr. Gladstone's Cabinets to talk with him about his new portfolio. "Why not begin," I said, "by examining the methods pursued in such a land as India ? With a subject population of 200 millions, and 70 or 80 millions more, practically dependent upon Britain, the lessons of such a field ought to teach you much !" "Bless my soul, yes," he ejaculated, "I must look into that ! What is the Poor Law system of India ?" And mightily astonished was the able Minister when I replied, "There is none at all !" Yet so, indeed, it is ; and the reasons of this, immeasurably creditable morally and socially to the Hindu people, are well worth grasping by such as would comprehend the inner aspects of Indian famines. First of all, India is the home of the Ideal—religious, metaphysical, and domestic—to an extent which makes those ridiculous who speak of her creeds as ignorant, or her inhabitants as "heathen." You never see any but the most wretched woman begging for alms there. Why ? The explanation proves how elevated, even if mistaken, the average moral sense is of the people. Every woman, not deformed, or an outcast, or insane—at least in the higher castes—has been betrothed at an early age to a boy, whose

household thenceforward adopts her entirely. If the little husband dies, before or during marriage, the disaster is regarded universally as the penalty for sins committed by the female in a previous life. The widow must submit, and will submit, not marrying again, but hoping, by patience, to rejoin her lord after death, and his family will, until her demise, loyally support her, for his sake. Practically these views obtain all over the land, and as every female child becomes betrothed all women are definitely provided for. If the rash ardor of certain crude reformers could have its will, and alter this, so as to promote the remarriage of Hindoo widows, all those who became wives for a second time would find neither of the two allied families willing to sustain a wife belonging in the next world to two husbands, or to none at all. Besides this, the sentiment of the *Bhao-bund*, or blood relationship, is all powerful in the land, and never repudiated. As also in Japan, where there are no poor laws and no paupers, the ties of kinship are everywhere acknowledged, discharged, and repaid; and the household cakes will be distributed to all who put forth the claim of poverty, hunger, and relationship. Add to all this, that charity is not so much a virtue, in India, as a habit, a religious necessity, an indispensable passport to further prosperous existences, and it will be seen why India, in a most tender and effective manner, fulfils the law which Christians only, or principally, talk about. A Sanskrit verse says that

“ When the door is rudely fastened, and the asker turns away,
Taence he bears with him thy good deeds, and his sins on thee do lay.”

And any one who reads my story of Sita and Bularam, an episode of the poem entitled “In an Indian Temple,” will discern to what terrible lengths can go the passion of hospitality, and the sacred ardors of charity in India. And what the upper castes do the lower largely imitate, so that at the beginning of a famine there is always an immense taciturn effort everywhere to do all for herself with India. Her people bow to the will of the gods, and shift alone as long as possible, and long after the latter rains have failed, and distress ought to be loudly proclaimed, they eke out with humble pride their failing stores of meal and pulse by bam-boo seeds, jungle fruits, boiled leaves of trees, and the *conjee* of thrice-cooked rice.

Then, again, the self-respect of Hindus is prodigious; and they "lose face" in applying to any save a kinsman for food, which indeed, as many Americans will know, is, especially if thus obtained, uneatable for high-castes when not lawfully prepared. A Hindu servant whom I desired to cure surreptitiously of his deadly weakness after fever, by beef-tea, told me, quite sweetly, that he would have poisoned me, upon recovery, if I had carried out the idea. Again, the *purdah-nashin*, the "curtain-dwellers," those women who must not be seen in public—a foolish fashion adopted from the Mogul, and never really Aryan—cannot announce their misery, nor take an alms-bowl to the Relief Camp. There is a vast category of these—women and children—who begin slowly and certainly to perish as soon as the famine begins, and who must and will succumb at last, unreached by the great hand of the government, or only reached when despair has brought them—haggard, wasted, and shameless—to snatch that last meal, which is desperately craved for, but the very eating of which is poison to the enfeebled and ulcerated stomach.

And this last remark brings us to one most subtle and fatal fact about Indian famines—so momentous in connection with any hope of successfully contending with those scourges that it has always to be borne in mind from the very outset. I ventured, indeed, in a recent conversation with Lord George Hamilton, at the commencement of the present trouble, personally to draw the minister's particular attention to it. Starvation is essentially a slow disease the fatal crisis of which really arrives early, and oft-times unsuspected by the victim and his would-be helpers. The physical condition of the Hindu race is not a strong one. Lofty as those Buddhistic doctrines are, which Brahmanic India has adopted from "The Light of Asia," about abstaining from the slaughter of animals, and from flesh-food, human bodies are all, I fear, imperfectly fitted by nature for an exclusively vegetable diet, which must, moreover, be consumed in large bulk to get adequate nourishment. The Hindu mothers allow their little naked children to eat boiled rice until the string tied round them appears buried in the skin of the distended stomach, and from youth to age the people are badly prepared internally for the crisis. Under daily stress of hunger the mucous membranes become impoverished, and their functions impaired. The little store of fat in the tissues wastes quickly away. The poor, thin

blood lacks current and substance to feed the failing limbs; and the man or woman has really died weeks before that day upon which—walking skeletons of bone and shrunken skin—they have found the government distributor, and, with or without some futile effort to carry a basket of earth or break some *kunkur*, have taken with lean fingers the food which they could no longer digest—food which, as I have said, actually poisons them by setting up in their stripped intestines a wasting diarrhœa. This is how scores, perchance hundreds of thousands, of victims, will this year perish, with the Queen's bounty in their hands and the savor of the goodly nourishment in nostrils already pinched by death. Furthermore, there arrives in the latter stages of the famine-death, after those fiercer pangs of the hungry belly, and those first furies of the starved body, a horrible lethargy, the expression of a brain fed with pale blood deficient in volume and nutrition. In this condition the miserable victim has already really ended his existence, albeit apparently alive. That sad and gaunt spectre which the government officer has just pitifully accepted as a candidate for "free doles" died last moon in the far-off village to which he has clung too long. It was a corpse to which the warm *conjee* was so kindly granted. He, patient sufferer, is defunct now almost before that rice broth had cooled which might once have been his salvation.

It must be mournfully added that the chronic insanitation of Indian towns and villages adds measureless perils to famine, weakening many who might have tided over a brief time of fasting to the finishing point of fate. British hygiene has done something for the cities in the way of pure water, civic regulations, medical dispensaries, and so forth. It might do more if properly supported by the sluggish native municipalities. But if the death rate of the Peninsula, even in ordinary seasons, were closely studied, it would be seen what a mere "bagatelle" the loss of even five million lives by famine is, contrasted with that "15 per thousand" which is the average *excess* rate of Indian mortality-records over those of London or Boston. Nay, that Indian death rate often rises to 100 per 1,000, and the only medical solace is that the survivors must be protected by an inherited immunity. Graceful and picturesque and pastoral as must seem to the traveller that Hindu village existence, where all is

so peaceful and so sunny, the sanitary expert shudders at what he sees—and smells—about the lively tank and around the gossiping well. An official report says very truly :

“The Indian village is subject to one class of unhealthy influences, which sufficiently accounts for the chronic low condition which makes the inhabitants ready victims of famine or epidemic disease. The inadequate and impure water-supply of a year of drought is only an exaggeration of the deficiency and impurity which are at all times the characteristics of too many cities and villages. Wells, even where deriving their supplies from uncontaminated sources, are often liable to many forms of pollution ; and the ordinary tank, in which personal ablutions, washing of clothes and utensils, and watering of cattle are alike conducted, becomes in time of drought a source of pestilence.”

At the hour when I write these lines, all who know Indian domestic life in the towns and villages are shuddering at the thought that the new bubonic plague, which is an importation into the Peninsula from China, may join hateful and horrible hands with the famine and stalk together through the decimated swarms of the native population. Hitherto there has not been any marked contact between the two. Bombay, Kurachi, and Poona, where this evil pest has appeared, are all very well-fed centres. But if such a combination should strike certain regions which figure dark upon the famine map, even the power and wealth and splendid dutifulness of the Queen's government in India would probably stand paralyzed and nerveless before such a human catastrophe as history has never yet chronicled.

It is necessary, for any completeness of view, to say something about the methods of supplying grain foods in India. Never does a famine year occur but voices arise clamorously bidding the Sirkar to purchase and import vast quantities of cereals wherewith to rescue the peasants. Happily no Indian Viceroy has been or will ever be so ill advised as to comply with that mad demand. If he did, he might indeed freight a mighty flotilla of steamers with bags of rice and casks of flour, and just when the rain fell, and the stress was ending, he might display a handsome but useless stock in trade as a colossal corn-merchant. But he would have killed dead the trade of the Bunya, and by that same man and his little shop—much abused as they both are—the Hindu people contrive to exist. Squatted in the midst of their sacks and pots filled with lentils and millet, rice and maize and barley and grain, Bapoo and Gunesh, the village corn-chandlers, are the pipes

by which the vast ordinary fertility of India flows to her children. In olden days the pipes ran unevenly because of the distances of place from place, and consequent bad communication for produce. Even now if the total out-turn of foodstuffs in the land could but be spread by some mechanical and commercial miracle over the entire surface of its necessity, India would see very few die of famine in her confines before next May or June bring the glad rain and good low prices. At this moment a rupee, which will only buy nine seers of corn in Sholapore, easily purchases twenty-six seers in Kashmir. But the main future hope of the country is to get this equilibration of supply achieved by the indigenous agencies helped—nay, it may be, forced—by the ever-developing improvement of roads and extension of railways. There is this fortunate point about a bad famine year, that it starts all sorts of deferred rural and municipal works, and in that way provides fresh weapons for a future battle. Each sad campaign of this brave war of redemption turns faults into lessons, and leaves the forces of beneficence stronger. Whatever the government can do in lowering the railway rates for the carriage of grain, facilitating steam transport from the foreign rice markets, remitting dues, and doubling official solicitude, it does by long habit of vigilance and liberality. But it must never turn grain-dealer. Too true it is that Bapoo and Gunesh—those useful but crafty shopkeepers—make sharp use of a dearth to pile up their profits, and that in many a spot there are grain pits, and the *goladars* filled to bursting in the midst of people dying or dead of hunger. But India would be lost, indeed, in the future if her ancient mode of supply were frightened out of being by the crushing competition of the Sirkar in the market. It is a thousand times better that the indignant mob should, now and then, beat to death with their *lathies* an unscrupulous *marwarrie*, or a wicked *bunya*, who will not sell his grain at fair prices, than that one rash if splendid act of imperial impatience in this respect should paralyse India's immemorial custom—usually a very effective custom—of distributing the food-stuffs to her population.

It will be seen, by this stage why, when London, through her present very distinguished Lord Mayor, desired to start a compassionate subscription for the famine-stricken, eastern portion of the Empire, there was official hesitation on the side of

the Viceroy and his Councillors. So late as December 17, 1896, we find Lord Elgin telegraphing :

“We venture to recommend no action be taken in England in regard to subscriptions for the relief of distress in India until the situation has more fully declared itself. Definite decision depends upon winter rains.”

Some public outcry was made at this, and the Mansion House subscription has since been set on foot and has attained already generous proportions. As a manifestation of sympathy and deep desire to help our distressed fellow-subjects in the East, those kindly donations now pouring in, that noble list of rich and well-to-do Londoners and others freely giving, after the example of Her Majesty, who heads the honorable catalogue, possess indubitably an infinite value. On the last similar occasion the then Chief Magistrate of London was enabled to send seven hundred thousand pounds sterling to the Indian authorities, and, no doubt, a very handsome amount will be despatched by the present Lord Mayor, Mr. George F. Philipps, before the stress and the subscription close together. Yet, from what has been written, it must be perceived that any such effort of private charity, in face of so prodigious a calamity, is really like sending a basket of fruit or a bouquet of flowers to a sick friend as far as any substantial aid from the movement can go. At the time when Lord Elgin sent that message he was spending a lakh of rupees and more per day in actual relief of famine victims, the number of whom was given at 1,183,000 even at that early stage. He has to confront the dread days of February, March, and April; for little help can come from land or labor or fall in prices before May and June. The daily lakhs now being expended will swell to weekly crores ; the returns of destitute men, women, and children whose mouths the Sirkar must fill will mount to millions, and, in presence of such a prospect, a few hundreds of thousands of pounds from sympathizing British citizens cannot seem to those primarily engaged in this great battle of life and death more than a trivial and merely complimentary matter. The Viceroy and his officers will have to lavish imperial treasure with “both hands” to fight, perchance, the plague as well as the famine—to make war against the offended Hindu gods for the rescue of the Indian people, all with the sad certainty that failing some happy caprice of nature they can only win in the end a drawn battle. Like bugle notes, however, before the fighting, sound forth these general orders and

declarations which we take from Lord Elgin's latest printed despatch :

"Relief arrangements adequate. In connection with the present distress, machinery previously elaborated has worked well, and organization being rapidly expanded to meet growing demands.

"Numbers on relief will now increase rapidly, and continue to grow till reaping of spring harvest in March, April, gives employment, and must remain large until Autumn crops reaped in September.

"Landlords, often assisted by government loans, doing much for their tenants, and private charity active, especially in larger towns. Advances are being freely given by government, generally without interest, for construction and repair of wells and embankments to extend and secure spring crops, and for employment of famine-stricken in agricultural improvements.

"Stamp duty remitted in case of all loans, public or private, for relief of distress.

"Government forests thrown open to grazing and extraction of jungle products, and surplus grass sent as fodder to affected tracts.

"Food stocks reported ample in Burma ; adequate in Madras, where rayats of affected tracts hold large stocks ; sufficient for a year in affected districts of Bombay generally ; sufficient in Punjab, where dealers of one affected district said to be holding up enormous stocks through southeastern districts, importing from Sindh ; sufficient for the present in Northwest Provinces and Oudh and Central Provinces, where spring crops are expected to carry them on to autumn harvest ; and, except in one district, sufficient for the present in Bengal, where rice can be promptly imported from Burma.

"Adequate arrangements have been made for supply of relief camps inland.

"Railway rates for grain have been reduced.

"Government has publicly proclaimed its rigid policy of non-interference with private enterprise, and abstention from purchase on its own account, save possibly in definite tracts, under special conditions of difficulty."

It will be seen in what a high and stern temper of honor and duty this British government in Calcutta sets itself to the periodical task of contending against nature for the vast multitudes of human life entrusted to it. And it will save lives by the million, while it perhaps loses—inevitably loses—so many millions for the reasons above displayed. But assuredly here is a spectacle of conscientious rule which effectually justifies our presence in India, which makes our Raj there a fact welcome to humanity and to civilization, and which may especially impart satisfaction to intelligent minds in the United States, since the credit of any such measure of success as these faithful Indian officials shall attain against odds so formidable belongs to the genius and to the energy of our common race.

EDWIN ARNOLD.